

Plan - Thurs,
Fri + weekend
to finish
Mm - work in Rob

1-19-2000

After watching the movie *Fat Man and Little Boy*, and reading the book "Hiroshima" by John Hershey, I had to ask myself a question. This question was a very basic one. Was it a moral decision for us to have dropped the bomb? Opinions on this differ sharply, so I decided to find out for myself.

Going into the research, I knew quite a deal. I knew Hiroshima was the target city because it was virtually ignored by US bombers. I knew the rationale was to both save lives, and keep the USSR in check. I also knew that many more Japanese died defending Pacific island fortresses than died at Hiroshima. What really surprised me was the amount of internal opposition there was to the use of "Fat Man" and "Little Boy."

Said opposition is my first inquiry. How did those who knew about it really feel about dropping the bomb? Those within the Manhattan Project were largely against it, with one notable exception, General Groves. Dr. Oppenheimer, as well as most of the other scientists, were opposed on moral grounds to the bombing of civilians. Albert Einstein, the man who's ideas were the basis of the bomb, was also strongly opposed to its use. These figures were not the ones who surprised me, however. Rather, people like General Eisenhower, Douglas MacArthur, Brigadier General Carter Clark, Herbert Hoover, and Admiral Leahy were the real shockers. Admiral Leahy was even referred to the use of the bomb as "an ethical standards common to the barbarians of the dark ages. I was not taught to make war ... by destroying women and children." The only part of America where I did not find even the slightest bit of opposition is the Marine Corps. Many marines felt that the bombing saved their lives. Even the Japanese themselves felt that in a time of war, the use of a weapon like this was to be expected.

This brings to my second question: Did the bombing save lives? The Pacific campaign shows that the Japanese defended every inch of land with their lives. This was true even when they knew they could not win, such as Iwo Jima, Okinawa, and Saipan. With few exceptions, they fought to the death on all of these islands, as well as many others where their odds of success were in their favor, such as Truk and Tinian.

A million plus casualties were projected for the US side alone, should an invasion take place. Defending their main island, the Japanese would have been more fanatical than ever. The main body of their army was, for the most part, in fact, fighting the war in China. They would have been able to defend themselves. On Okinawa, more people died fighting for that island than did in the bombing of Hiroshima. That was on the Japanese side alone, and completely excludes all US casualties. On the flip side of the argument, the navy thought that a naval blockade of Japan could end the war. One was already in place, and would have merely needed to be given time. When I read this, I found myself wondering how many people would have died as the result of starvation or malnutrition as the result of extended blockade? I, for one, believe that the bombs saved lives.

My final opposition concerned the target cities: Hiroshima and Nagasaki. Many noteworthy people opposed the bombing of civilian targets. These included the previously quoted General Leahy, Robert Oppenheimer, and Herbert Hoover. Hoover was quoted as saying that "the indiscriminate killing of women and children, revolts my soul." Surprisingly, even the man with ultimate say over the bomb, President Truman, opposed nuking civilians. Truman believed that Hiroshima was actually a military base. In a speech he made on August 9, 1945 in regards to the bombing, he informs that country that Hiroshima was a "military base," and then goes on to say "We wished in this

first attack to avoid, insofar as possible, the killing of civilians." Later in the same speech, he urged Japanese civilians to leave industrialized cities immediately, because they would be targets. This plea, however, was made after a second bomb had already devastated Nagasaki. There were those who believed an uninhibited island should be the target. It was thought that a demonstration just might scare the Japanese into surrendering, but that idea was nixed because American POWs might be relocated into Japanese cities. Scaring would have been ineffective, as the Japanese were warned about the bombing days prior to Hiroshima, but chose not to relay that warning to their civilians. Even though the eyes of hindsight, which almost inevitably illuminates other possibilities, there was no viable alternative.

Were the bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki a moral thing to do? Did it really save lives? Would a blockade have been more humane, or would it have killed many more by much slower, and considerably more painful means? I believe it would have. I believe that the bombing saved lives, and I also believe that there were no other options worthy of serious consideration. In my opinion, the bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki were normally justified.